

# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE



*A Publication Concerned With  
Natural History and Conservation*

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

# TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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## The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

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Ann Mackenzie

**Objectives of the Club:** To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse the information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

**Club Publications:** THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada, and TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a quarterly providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on Club activities.

**Field Trips, Lectures** and other natural history activities are arranged for local members; see "Coming Events" in this issue.

**Membership Fees:** Individual (yearly) \$33    Sustaining (yearly) \$50  
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Views expressed in *Trail & Landscape* are not necessarily those of the OFNC

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# Welcome New Members

## Ottawa Area

Eileen C. Armstrong & Family  
Deb & Bill Barrett  
Bill & Barbara Bowman  
Brittany Boychuk & Family  
M. Brill-Edwards & Family  
Brandon D. Burda  
Anthony L. Cannons  
Anthony Filgate  
Marianne F. Fournier  
T.E. Gama-Pinto & Family  
Gwenne R. & Clyde Goodlet  
M. & B. Helliker  
Lise Heroux & Family  
Ron D. Hoffe & Family  
Nicola Kennedy & Family  
Christine Lalande & Family

Penny L. Laughlin  
Devaki Laycock  
J. Mendis/V. Samarasooriya  
Cora Murphy & Family  
Hemraz Palawan  
Laura Penney/Jonathon Joncas  
Peter Pilgrim & Family  
Kyla M. Ramsey  
Maria S.C. Serote & Family  
Doug J. Spry & Family  
Geoff Stimpson & Family  
Chris Tweedie  
Irene E. Utovac & Family  
Neil R. Whattam  
Mona Whitaker

## Québec

Gillian G. Shields Barbary

## Ontario

Réal Sarrazin

Henry Steger  
Chair, Membership Committee  
February 2010

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# “Golden Anniversary” Membership List 1942 - 2010

*Henry Steger*  
*Membership Chair*

## Joined in

1942	R.Y. Edwards	Victoria BC
1943	C. Stuart Houston	Saskatoon SK
1943	Mr. & Mrs. H.A. Thomson	Ottawa ON
1946	Dr. Jack M. Gillett	Ottawa ON
1948	Mr. David Erskine	Willowdale ON
1948	Enid Frankton	Ottawa ON
1950	H.G. Lumsden	Aurora ON
1951	Dr. E.L. Bousfield	Mississauga ON
1954	Yvonne & James F. Bendell	Clayton ON
1956	Dr. Charles D. Bird	Esquimaux AB
1956	J.W. Holliday	Ottawa ON
1957	R.E. Bedford & Family	Ottawa ON
1957	J.E. & Mary E. Bryant	Ottawa ON
1957	Dr. C.S. Churcher	Gabriola Island BC
1958	Elizabeth Alexander	Cumberland ON
1958	F.R. Cook	Ottawa ON
1960	Dr. A.J. Erskine	Sackville NB
1960	V. Bruce Collins	Bancroft ON
1960	Dr. G.R. and Dorice Hanes	Richmond ON

One prominent and long-time member of the Club passed away this year. W.J (Bill) Cody had been a member since 1947.

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## The President's Perspective

You belong to a very impressive Club: The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club—800 members and 130 years of history. How many volunteer organizations can make that claim? Since January 12, I have had the honour of being the President, a role I take very seriously. Therefore, I decided to include a short note in each *Trail and Landscape* to share my personal perspective on the accomplishments and challenges of the OFNC.



The more I have gotten to know the many facets of our club the more I am amazed by its scope and diversity. Those of you who have read Dan Brunton's article on the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club (CFN, Vol. 118 -1), or who heard his talk in December on the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Club, will know what I am talking about. We are the largest field naturalist club in Canada, and the oldest. We are also the only one that produces a scientific journal as well as a quarterly newsletter. Having our own wildlife garden in the heart of the city is a huge accomplishment just on its own. We have been the driving force behind saving the Alfred Bog and helping preserve the Larose Forest. Recently our club used bequest donations to help the Nature Conservancy buy land in the Frontenac Arch north of Kingston and the Wolf Grove area near Almonte.

All of this is in addition to our monthly speakers and a diverse schedule of field trips. The young people in the Macoun Club have an outing or speaker every week, organized by our tireless volunteers. The Conservation Committee has the demanding task of overseeing the implications of a growing city on natural habitats. Many of you are primarily interested in birding and focus on those events. What an ambitious set of activities to be kept rolling by volunteers!

As impressive as our past and present may be, it is critical that we are positioning ourselves for the future. Like a house that needs constant upgrades and fresh coats of paint, our club must be regularly examining itself to stay current. Since the early nineties the number of members in the OFNC has been declining. This is a situation faced by many organizations today. Are the activities of our Club still relevant in

2010? Are they being delivered in the best manner? Are there changes you would like to see? Are we still serving the Ottawa community in promoting the appreciation of the natural world and inspiring people to preserve and protect it?

As Dan Brunton stated in his article “. . . the OFNC is not a static, hard-and-fast ‘thing.’ It is a community, an association of like minds that aims to explore and celebrate the magnificent natural world of the Ottawa Valley and Canada.”

I look forward to working with all ‘like-minds’ as we consider various paths leading to the future of the OFNC.

Ann MacKenzie

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## Asset or Liability? Debit or Credit?

*Ann MacKenzie*

Do you know the difference? Not all the expertise needed by the Club comes under a natural science heading.

The Club is a business with significant financial transactions. Are you comfortable with accounting and accounting software (we use Simply Accounting)? If so, and you have a bit of time to volunteer, we could use a hand with our books.

Contact the Treasurer, Frank Pope at (613) 829-1281 or [f.pope@sympatico.ca](mailto:f.pope@sympatico.ca).

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# Conservation Matters

*Christine Hanrahan*

## **THE GREENBELT COALITION**

We continue to focus much of our energy on the Greenbelt Coalition, through the participation of Stan Rosenbaum and Ken Young, who represent the OFNC. Fifteen environmental and community groups are represented in the coalition, working together to produce a position paper with regard to the NCC's review of the Greenbelt Master Plan. Stan provided a good summary in the last "Conservation Matters" (Rosenbaum 2010). The NCC held a "visioning" exercise on November 25/26, 2009, which Stan attended. There has been concern that the views of attendees at the November meeting, were not reported accurately at the recent (January 2010) series of NCC open houses. The agricultural representative on the coalition, has noted that the OFNC's recommendation to restrict hay cutting to protect grassland birds, will raise objections from tenant farmers on the NCC land.

More information on the Greenbelt Coalition can be found at the coalition website: [www.greenbeltcoalition.ca](http://www.greenbeltcoalition.ca).

## **LAROSE FOREST**

Larose Forest now has a logo which is to be used on all signs and material pertaining to the forest. The OFNC provided information regarding the species of trillium (Painted Trillium) used in the logo. New entry signs have been erected at all major access points into the forest. A draft plan to control invasive species in Larose Forest has also been prepared with action to take place this summer, 2010.

## **PROPOSED RESOLUTION ON WIND FARMS**

The OFNC was contacted by Chris Grooms, President of the Kingston Field Naturalists, and Cheryl Anderson, President of the Prince Edward County Field Naturalists, regarding a proposed Ontario Nature (ON) resolution on wind power development in Prince Edward County. There is concern over the impact this could have on birds, particularly migratory species, who pass along the lakefront in great numbers, spring and fall. While the resolution is not opposed to wind power, it does call for such sites to be located 5 km from provincial parks and important bird areas. While this resolution focuses on Prince Edward County, Ontario Nature, in 2008, issued a proposed policy that included "all wind energy projects" and asked that they be "*subject to adaptive management approaches that monitor impacts on birds and*

bats and implement mitigative measures whenever excessive bird or bat mortality is found.” The resolution will be discussed at the Eastern Ontario Regional meeting in May.

**Acknowledgments:** The above article was prepared based on Stan’s monthly Conservation Committee summaries.

#### **References**

Rosenbaum, Stan. Conservation Matters. *T&L* 44(1):3-4.

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## The 131<sup>st</sup> Annual Business Meeting

*Karen McLachlan Hamilton*

January is traditionally the Ottawa Field-Naturalists’ Club (OFNC) annual business meeting. This year was no exception. Although not usually well attended, it is necessary for the Club to hold such meetings, and it really is the best way for members to get a true sense of the operations of the OFNC.

This year marked a change in Council. Ken Allison stepped down as President, and Ann Mackenzie moved from Vice-President to President. She will also remain as Finance Chair. There are two new Vice-Presidents: Fenja Brodo and Jeff Skevington. Michael Murphy (Past President) and Gillian Marston (Education and Publicity) both left Council while Christine Wong, became the new Excursions and Lectures Chair. Once you sift through the changes, what was evident is there is no Education and Publicity Chair. Fenja offered to act in the interim, but she is hoping someone will replace her. So if anyone is interested in joining Education and Publicity committee (or any other), or interested participating in other events, leave a message at the Club number (613-722-3050) or contact the Club at [www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca). The OFNC is a not for profit organization, is volunteer-based, and relies on the help of its members to accomplish everything it does.

So what are individual committees involved in? Here is a brief summary of what each committee accomplished in 2009.

#### **Awards**

In 2009, the Awards Committee selected seven recipients from nominations submitted by Club members. These awards were presented at the annual Soirée

which was highlighted in Volume 43, number 3 of *T&L*.

### **Birds**

The Fall and Dunrobin Christmas Bird Count were well attended and there was another successful Peregrine Falcon Watch. The committee continues to operate the bird status line and the rare bird alert as well as the continual updating of the comprehensive Ottawa bird record database.

### **Conservation**

The primary focus was with the Greenbelt Coalition. As discussed in Conservation Matters, the National Capital Commission is reviewing its 1996 Greenbelt Master Plan. Being a natural history club, the OFNC sees the Greenbelt as a significant asset to this region. I believe Stan Rosenbaum (Conservation Chair) reflects the sentiments of many when he says that the future carries many uncertainties, and the best approach is to retain public ownership of all Greenbelt land and to refrain from erecting built infrastructure upon it.

### **Education and Publicity**

This committee was responsible for designing the Club t-shirts, travel mugs, plus other things displayed at the monthly meetings. They were also responsible for producing some of the guide books, brochures, and display boards. If you have seen the OFNC display board at a public location, chances are a member of this committee was there too.

### **Excursions and Lectures**

This committee organized 32 field trips, 10 monthly meetings, the annual soirée, one workshop, and an additional talk at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. There were two canoe trips, two trips specifically for families, and an active participation in the North American Butterfly Count.

### **Finance**

The biggest decision made by this committee in 2009 was, with Council's approval to donate OFNC money to the Nature Conservancy for the purchase of the Wolf Grove property. However, at the same time, Council was advised that this will be the last major expenditure until there is a change in Club's financial situation.

### **Fletcher Wildlife Garden**

Last year they managed to make many improvements within and around several habitats. They had another successful native plant sale, produced four newsletters, created several photo galleries containing over 100 000 page views, and spent countless hours removing invasive plants and general weeding are just a few of the activities.

### **Macoun**

The Macoun Club has a strong and active Junior (aged 8-11) and Intermediate (aged 12-14) groups. In 2009, this club had 18 indoor meetings and 18 field trips (including four special field trips in the summer). They have an annual publication

and a monthly newsletter. For more information about the Macoun Club, I suggest you check out [www.ofnc.ca/macoun/index.php](http://www.ofnc.ca/macoun/index.php).

### Membership

There are approximately 800 members, most from the Ottawa area, but the Club has members from other parts of Ontario and Québec as well as other provinces and the USA.

### Publications

The *Canadian Field-Naturalist* continues to work towards getting back on track. An online version of the journal is essentially ready to go. *Trail and Landscape* had another successful year, publishing 184 pages. A grand thank you goes to all of you who contributed. *CFN* and *T&L* would not be in existence without member input.

If any of the committees, or any of the projects within a committee, are of interest to you, why not contact the OFNC? A complete report will be published in an upcoming *Canadian Field-Naturalist*.

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## OFNC Committees for 2010

*Frank Pope*

The following OFNC committee members were approved by Council at its meeting on February 15. Committee members may be added during the year as approved by Council. The members listed below will operate your club in 2010. Committee Chairs appear in bold letters with their telephone numbers and email addresses. Should you have any questions, comments, complaints or compliments pertaining to the operations of a committee, or should you desire to serve on a committee, please contact the Chair or speak to a member of the relevant committee.

### AWARDS

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Hamilton

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Frank Pope

Joyce Reddoch

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# On Missing Bill: Recollections from 5 Decades

*Francis R. Cook*

In the last issue of *Trail & Landscape*, in a forthcoming issue of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, and elsewhere, Bill Cody's accomplishments in botany and service, his unfailing help and unflappable good humour that extended to all around him, close or casual, have been recounted by many. My thanks to Karen for asking me to add a few words on my own sense of loss and from an association that spanned some 50 years.

Foremost, gone are the periodic visits or ringing of my phone at the museum or home, and the cheery voice greeting me when I answered with "It's that pest again . . . I was just talking to the printer and he says things are slack at the moment and it would be a good time to submit some additional manuscripts for typesetting . . ." The gentlest of pestering, but relentless—especially when he suspected I was slipping behind (an all too frequent occurrence). And I knew that he was equally relentless with the printer . . . "Francis was wondering [regardless whether Francis was wondering or enjoying the lull] when you will have some proof for him to correct" or "Is the next issue on the press?" . . . and with authors "We were just wondering when you were going to pay the invoice for the page charges." Bill was constantly focussed on moving the journal business along and assuring that all contributors shared in its survival. He always used the phone for contacts, a carry-over from the pre-internet, and was an invaluable source for a multitude of miscellaneous information and references in the pre-Google days. He always had a pile of discarded manuscript paper, turned over with blank side up, by his phone to use to write "to do" reminders to himself long before recycling became trendy.

While my museum office was in the Victoria Memorial Building, Bill would drop in whenever visiting the museum's botanists. Later, when I was moved to 1501 Carling Avenue "temporarily" (for over 20 years), he would often stop in at noon on his way home (just off Maitland) from his office in the Saunders Building on the Experimental Farm. When the Museum research staff and collections were moved across the river to Aylmer (now Gatineau), it was I who stopped to see him, as Agriculture now was on my route home southwest of Ottawa. But 45 miles from Ottawa, in our rural retreat, even on weekends, there could come a knock on the

door. Like as not near noon, it would be Bill, with his own sandwiches, who had come out to visit his son who lived nearby and stopped to check that I was not wasting my weekend on something not related to the *CFN*. Actually, the additional distance to see us was part of his always multitasking approach as on the way he could scan the roadside ditches. Bill would collect every discarded bottle he spotted, even in Ottawa where he frequently checked city parks after the inevitable weekend parties held by others. He did this for the exercise. The cash from recycling bottles was donated to his church's charities.

Bill was in the church choir but also sang spontaneously whenever he chose and frequently recited a few treasured verses. Included was one often lightheartedly muttered whenever some occurrence had been particularly irritating: "Go to father, she said, for she knew that I knew her father was dead, and the place he had gone after the life he had led." Most around him found the singing at least tolerable, but there was one occasion a lady naturalist author had phoned to enquire about page charges and was greeted with a serenade (it was sometimes hard to get Bill to stop once started). She subsequently wrote to me with a complaint of harassment, and I had to patiently explain that harassment was simply not in the man's character, and any offense was totally unintentional and unrealized. Bill was just being Bill. Apparently she was satisfied, as she never raised it further, and did publish with us again.

When I had arrived at the National Museum of Canada in May 1960 to assume the position as Curator of Herpetology, the chief zoologist, Frank Banfield, asked the question all new scientific staff in that era were asked: "Are you a member of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club?" to which I could answer, "Yes, since 1958" (and of the Macoun Field Club from 1951 to 1954). In 1961, I was asked to stand for OFNC Council, and was voted onto this august and venerable group of scientists and naturalists at the next Annual Meeting. Monthly Council meetings were my first contact with Bill Cody who had become Club Business Manager in 1948, and was to define and fill this position first for the Club in general, and later specifically for *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* until 2007.

In 1962, Bob Hamilton, a career editor at Agriculture Canada, who in 1956 had replaced Harold Senn as editor of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*, wanted to step down and I was approached to fill in. Bob quickly tutored me in basic editorial procedures (in those days copy was still set by hand in linotype by the printer with paste-ups of the resulting galleys to make page proof, procedures now long replaced by computerization) and philosophy (drilling me to expect authors often to be protective of their manuscripts against changes with the zeal of a mother reacting to any criticism of a first-born; though it was only later I realized that editors were even more sensitive). It fell to Bill to give me much needed day-to-day guidance on

individual problems with authors, reviewers, or printer.

After five years, in 1967, with prospect of going on educational leave to pursue a Ph.D. the next year in Manitoba, I handed the editorial position over to a fresh young dynamic research scientist at Agriculture Canada, Ted Mosquin. Two years after I returned, Ted moved on to edit *Nature Canada* and Loraine Smith took the role as *CFN* editor, and soon asked me to serve as Associate Editor for herpetology. In 1981, Loraine resigned and the search committee for a replacement approached me to step in for a year as Editor again. My first response was acceptance only if assured that Bill was continuing as Business Manager and, with this given, we resumed our partnership.

Bill, by then, had not just served with, but adapted to, five very different editors (and now was faced with me for a second time), each with individual idiosyncrasies and often innovative and progressive editorial improvements to the format and emphasis of the journal. Yet basics remained the same—a peer-reviewed, field study orientated, natural history journal emphasizing northern North America, that aimed at being generally readable by both naturalists and scientists, both specialists and generalists. A good measure of its stability was provided by Bill whose care in shepherding the finances was vital to the journal's survival. We shared an abiding belief that a Canadian independent peer-reviewed natural history publication was still important in an increasingly specialized scientific universe, and that naturalists and students should be encouraged and helped to bring their submissions to the standards set by established scientists. We also shared the belief that the journal should be supported by both the Club and by authors together sharing the costs, and it should avoid dependence on outside grants which can vanish on a yearly basis or attempt to dictate editorial policy for their own aims.

At the Saunders Building, each visit I made was special due to the friendly and cordial atmosphere among both scientists and support staff due in no small part to the tone set by the always cheerful Bill. And even if I arrived shortly after 8:00 am, Bill invariably was there earlier, often before most of his colleagues. Throughout his years on council Bill hardly ever missed a meeting, and the Club council had to wait for a rare absence in 1979 to elect him (by surprise to avoid his protest) as an honorary member for his, even at that time, long service. For many years the Publications Committee meetings, which Bill also never missed, were held over bag lunches at noon at the Saunders Building with Bill invariably greeting each committee member with a choice of tea or instant coffee. He even cooked and delivered the turkey for their annual staff Christmas party (he was far ahead of most of us in his sharing domestic burdens at home).

For all business manager correspondence and invoices, Bill was never weaned from

his trusted manual typewriter dating from the 1940s. Failed efforts were made, including moving a computer into his office for an extended period; it was ignored. In contrast, when others began having their manuscripts entered into computers at Agriculture, he joined in by having his entered by staff or daughter Leslie. In the early 1980s, he was among the first to submit a disc along with a hard copy of manuscripts for typesetting to the journal. Our printer at the time first regarded these discs as more bother than help to the typesetters, but within a couple of years would complain if a manuscript came without a disc, a rapid change aided by relentless championing from the sometimes otherwise luddite-seeming Bill. He had quickly realized that author-produced discs, even with editorial changes added, would save significant typesetting time for him to negotiate a reduction of costs with the printer and was unhesitatingly in favour of promoting this.

Bill and I long ago made a personal, gentleman's agreement of support that each would stay on in our roles as Business Manager and Editor, respectively, only as long as the other did (and the Club wanted us). Unforeseen was that Bill's health deterioration would catch both of us largely unawares. Fortunately, Treasurer, Frank Pope (who was already busy enough) alertly realized how wide-sweeping and complicated was Bill's contribution, and, in consultation, wrote down Bill's duties, so many of them assumed informally. Only then was he able to gradually and inoffensively take responsibility for more of the burden of handling the journal's business. (The same is not essential for the transition between editors as newcomers have been authors first and therefore well versed in editing and in the process of getting a manuscript to press).

In our period of transition, I had to violate my earlier pact in order to assist Frank in being Bill Cody, as Bill would have expected the benefits of his years of contribution be continued and not be squandered. Fortunately, Frank needed little programming in journal values, years in executive positions on Club council had him immersed in those that matched ours closely and he brought the same standards to the task. Near the end of Bill's long service, Sandra Garland led us into the posting of the journal online, and pdfs as an option instead of, or as well as, reprints. And after Bill stepped down we changed to produce invoices electronically and authors were contacted by e-mail, but even Bill would have soon given in to these measures himself, faced with continually rising postal rates.

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# Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden

*Christine Hanrahan*



A surprise winter resident in the Amphibian Pond at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG) has us all aflutter. On October 24 2009, a young beaver was found sitting on a mat of cattails near the turtle raft, making a meal of cattail stems. When I tried to get a photo, he slid into the water and swam to the other end of the pond near the bridge. I was excited to see this little guy, particularly as he was so active, but not surprised, for we have had this species turn up several times in the past and stay for a day or two, or three.

This visitor had other plans, however, as I quickly learned the next day when I saw the beginnings of a dam. Walking around to the south shore, I noticed he had been working very diligently on taking down one of the small willow trees. Within a day it was down and he was working on the second one nearby. Meanwhile, the dam

was growing quickly and a food raft, or food cache, was already established in the eastern half of the pond.

This was quite a different scenario than any we'd faced before and there was some concern about how many of our trees he'd remove. Even more troubling was the sheer unsuitability of our pond for a beaver's home. We worried that he would not be able to survive. However, as the days went by and the dam progressed, the water deepened, enough so that one evening when I was there he was able to dive down into the depths of the pond.

Eventually, I contacted Donna DuBreuil of the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre for assistance and advice. Donna proved to be a great source of information, help and encouragement. She told us that having a beaver in our pond was a wonderful way to educate people about this often misunderstood animal (Canada's national symbol after all). She also said, and this was later corroborated by other knowledgeable folk, that the beaver would most likely leave once spring came. I knew that young beaver left their family in their second year to make their own way in the world, hence the wandering beaver people sometimes find in the most unlikely locations in the autumn. I never expected one to actually stay and make his home, however temporary, in our pond. But, as Donna said, his time for finding a winter home where food was available, where he could make a den and lodge or a burrow, was limited. Our pond must have seemed like Mecca to this poor guy, and perhaps he thought that while not ideal, he could make the best of a bad situation.

When he started work on the large, self-seeded Manitoba Maple on the north side of the pond, a tree of a respectable diameter and height, we realized we had better wrap the other trees in the vicinity of the pond that we wanted to save. This was duly done. The Manitoba Maple, however, now lies over the pond, above his burrow with the tips in the water. Not quite the successful tree felling he had attempted, but at least some of the branches are reachable!

With all the interest generated amongst both volunteers and visitors to the garden, I decided that it would be useful to provide more information about this intriguing animal.

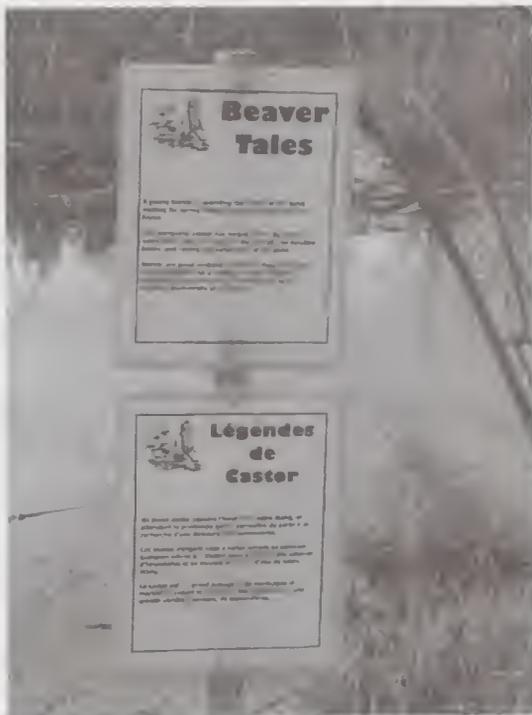
### **General**

Beaver are large aquatic, herbivorous rodents. They are non-migratory, they do not hibernate, and they are typically nocturnal, although they can be found during daylight hours at certain times of the year, particularly in fall and in spring. When the FWG beaver first turned up in late October, he was very visible during the day, but quickly confined his appearances to late afternoon and evening. Many times after dark, I have seen him swimming around his food raft, and sometimes have

heard him gnawing on a branch or twig. One evening, under a full moon, I watched him swimming leisurely around the pond, holding a twig in his front paws which he was gnawing on, the sound carrying across the pond to where I was standing just above the bridge. It was quite enchanting.

Somewhere along the way, beaver have gone from being admired to being reviled, in the public's mind. It is unfortunate that doing what comes naturally, brings these inoffensive animals into conflict with landowners, land managers, residents, and others.

As the dam at our pond lengthened, and the willows, and then the sumacs came down, his presence was soon noticed by FWG visitors. The misinformation spread about these animals is so prevalent that I found some visitors were horrified at the thought of a beaver living in our pond, even temporarily. Some even demanded to know what we were going to do about the "problem" and some helpful souls suggested they could set their dogs on it and drive it away. Others said we should call in a trapper. Naturally all such comments disturbed us. One woman, dismayed about his presence, told me that we would lose all our trees. I mentioned that it was very interesting how we get upset about the relatively few trees beaver take down (few in the grand scheme of things) yet accept wholesale destruction of acres of woodlands by developers. She conceded she had not thought of that. When told that many places hire trappers to remove the beaver, she thought I meant live-trapping. I soon set her straight and the idea that the animals were killed appalled her. I could tell from her subsequent comments that she was thinking rather differently about things. These and many other comments made us realize we had to let



*Beaver signs at the pond*

visitors know we were aware of the beaver and happy about his presence. However, by far the majority of comments have been positive. Many were excited at the thought that they might actually see a beaver, and I was rather surprised by how few were familiar with this delightful species.

We decided to erect a temporary sign by the pond letting people know that we accepted the beaver and at the same time, provide some information about beaver. I've since noticed a lot of people reading the signs and almost all of them are amazed and delighted at the thought that a beaver is living a few metres from where they are standing.

### Life Cycle

Our beaver is likely about two years old, for that is the age when the young leave to make their own way in the world. They may leave their natal site in spring, summer or fall but I've most often found wandering beaver in autumn and in the most unusual locations. I've seen them trying to cross busy roads in Ottawa, and found them in the tiniest of streams attempting to establish their home.

Beaver usually mate when two or three years old, the female giving birth to anywhere from 1-6 kits in the spring (the number usually dependent on how much food is available). Eventually these tiny creatures will attain a weight of upward of 25 kilograms (Forsyth 1985). Unusually, they are monogamous and mate for life, which somehow to me highlights even more the cruelty of trapping, for one of a pair is be killed, the other is left behind.

Family groups typically consist of both adults and the offspring of the previous two years. Once the young reach the age of two, they leave the colony to seek their own territory. As noted above, this is a difficult time for they wander into situations that are not only unsuitable but very dangerous. If they survive attacks by predators, and avoid cars on roads, they may end up being trapped (killed) to remove them from areas where they are not wanted which, in the City of Ottawa, seems to be most places. Another reason we are letting the beaver remain, is for just that reason . . . so many other places are unwelcoming. And we, after all, are a "Wildlife Garden."

Another hazard young beaver encounter when seeking their own territory, is hostility from beaver already established in ponds or wetlands. Normally peaceful animals, resident males will fight off intruders, particularly in situations where the wetland may be small and food supply limited. Vanishing wetlands mean that beaver have an ever harder time finding suitable habitat. Around Ottawa we can see examples of large wetlands being filled in for development. Beaver dislodged from their natal site often end up in places like the FWG or the Arboretum, where habitat is unsuitable (the latter site) and barely suitable (the former site).

As noted above, beaver do not hibernate. They remain active throughout the winter, warm and cosy in their lodge or bank burrow, dependent on the winter food supply laid up during fall, but sometimes emerging to wander off across the snow and gnaw at some trees. This is another reason why we decided to let the beaver remain at the pond. If we tried to live trap and move him to another location, chances are it would be too late for him to establish a territory, create a dam, build a lodge or burrow and lay in food.

### Lodging

Most of us are familiar with the typical beaver lodge, a big cone-shaped pile of logs, branches and mud in the middle of a pond, or sometimes, close to shore. However, beaver will also create bank burrows when conditions do not permit construction of a lodge. Sometimes they will construct both lodges and burrows and use the two. "Our" beaver has created a burrow, identified by a pile of sticks forming what looks like a minute lodge against the bank, and smeared with mud. It may be that he began building a lodge but realized it was not feasible given the dearth of trees, and/or the lack of time. The entrance will be underwater, as is usual with both burrows and lodges.



*Beaver dam at the pond.*

Lodges are elaborate affairs, allowing a family to live well and dry throughout the winter. During the summer and fall, repairs are made to the lodge, and fresh branches on a beaver lodge are

a sure sign that it is inhabited. It is not unheard of for otter or other animals to take over abandoned lodges.

### **Dams**

When a beaver finds an area that seems suitable, the first thing it does is start work on a dam. Beaver are not called "nature's engineers" for nothing. They exhibit great skill when dam-building, and are ingenious in situating dams in appropriate locations. Dams are not meant to be impermeable. Water is allowed to trickle through the dam, as we see with the one at FWG.

Initially, the dam at our pond was small and constructed of mud and bits of vegetation such as cattails, roots of grasses and possibly flowering rush. As the days went by, the dam was lengthened and a few twigs and branches were added. Dams can vary from just mud and vegetation, to elaborate affairs with large branches and even, sometimes, rocks. I've seen all types and sizes over the years. It is an amazing feat when we consider that these animals have no university degree in engineering! Dams also require constant care and maintenance, sometimes daily. "Busy as a beaver" is not just a trite saying, for these animals seem to work constantly. Remove a dam from a ditch or stream, and by the next day, it will be rebuilt! If a hole forms in a dam, the beaver is there right away, doing repair work. They never stop. This of course is what endears them to many people, but at the same time, makes others dislike them intensely. Dams can create problems, flooding out roads being the one that vexes most people. However, there are humane ways to resolve these issues that need not involve killing the animals. Unfortunately, some impatient souls, wanting a quick solution, dynamite the dams.

Dams may be small and only a few metres in length, enough to block a ditch or small stream. Or, they can exceed 100 metres and be so solid, deep and wide, that hikers can safely cross them, sometimes, two abreast. Indeed, beaver dams are well used by hikers to cross ponds. Some dams, in ponds no longer used by beaver, may be so old that they have trees and shrubs growing on them.

After a particularly heavy rainfall, the water in our pond rose and began to overflow one end of the dam as well as flow around the end of the dam. I could only imagine the beaver working frantically to try and control this situation, at the same time as he was trying to accumulate enough food to see him through the winter. Snow and cold weather came not long after the overflow, and for the time being, the area is frozen and water flow has ceased.

Another interesting construction activity is the creation of canals along which beavers can transport food and material for their dams and lodges. I doubt that the beaver at FWG will commence this activity in spring, but I have seen many such

canals in areas such as Larose Forest, and they are quite impressive!

### Food

When I first saw the beaver, he was perched on a mat of cattails and eating cattail roots. This is not as unusual as one may think. While we think of beaver eating only the bark of trees, they will in fact, eat a variety of vegetation. They are strictly vegetarian, so they don't rely on insects, fish or other animal food. During summer, beaver are particularly interested in fresh, tasty aquatic vegetation, fruit, grasses, herbaceous plants, and shrubs (Forsyth 1985, Hinterland Who's Who 2005). They seem to relish water-lilies. I saw one very large beaver in Gatineau Park the summer of 2009 plucking the water lily pads and consuming quantities of them. Somewhere I read that they will roll them up like a cigar before eating. I didn't notice that, but it may be that the beaver I was watching was not going to waste time with niceties. Beaver have also been found feeding on purple loosestrife (Darbyshire and Consaul 1999). It would be nice to think that beaver could be added to the list of biocontrol agents for this invasive plant, but there was not much other food around, so the animal was no doubt utilizing whatever was at hand.

When a beaver has finished eating the bark off twigs and branches, he will use them for dam or lodge construction. Waste not, want not!

Another sure sign that a beaver is in residence at a pond or wetland, is the presence in fall and winter of a food cache or food raft, an accumulation of branches spread out near the lodge or burrow, sometimes over a considerable area.

Recently, I



*Beaver food cache.*

came across an enormous food cache in Larose Forest, the biggest I've ever seen. It extended far out from the bank (there was no lodge at this site) to at least halfway across the large pond.

Our beaver, in addition to immediately starting dam construction, began accumulating his food cache. Mostly it consisted of Manitoba Maple, willow, Red Osier Dogwood and sumac, the trees most readily available nearby. I watched one evening as he dragged some branches under the water, and was relieved to see this because it meant he probably had other food beneath the surface cache. The visible part of the cache was fairly meager in size, so it was good to see him taking food to store underneath it. This is typical behaviour: beaver will build the raft on the surface of the water, and then frequently add to it underneath. A large cache, such as I saw at Larose, would really be twice the size if there was a similar amount underwater. Of course, there is probably a beaver colony present at that site, not a single animal as at FWG. When a beaver family is present, food must be stored in sufficient quantity for the entire crew! Beaver will also resort to eating the roots of aquatic plants such as cattails which they will take during the winter under the frozen pond surface.

Beaver have definite food preferences when it comes to trees. Willow, poplar and birch appear to be favorites. However, they will eat other species, depending on what is available. It may be that the nutritional quality of these three species mentioned, is higher than for other trees, or it may simply be that they taste the best! Some trees are cut not for food, but for building, and they may take the least palatable for this purpose. I am amazed at times, by the sheer size of some of the trees that beaver attempt to take down. Do they think that if they can pull it off, they'll dine well for the rest of the year? Somewhere, I can't recall where now, I came across a gigantic cottonwood that was half gnawed through, and knew that even if it was felled, there was no way that even a team of beaver could drag it back to the pond, which was a short distance away. However, they would probably take as many branches as they could cut.

Beaver would prefer not to travel far from water when foraging for food, for obvious reasons. They are more prone to attack, and the work of bringing trees back to the pond from afar takes considerable time and energy. Nonetheless, there are times when these animals have to travel a great distance to gather food. It is easy to see how difficult this would be, for not only must they bring down trees, but they must transport them back over often rough terrain to their pond. Around ponds that have been inhabited for some time, well-trod beaver trails are frequently found. I have come across some that are wide, packed down and of quite a length. At FWG, the beaver has done no more than climb out of the pond and take trees closest to the shore. With the near-constant activity from dogs and people, he is probably afraid to chance even a short trek from the pond.

### What happens next?

Once spring comes and the pond thaws, the beaver will become more visibly active, if he has survived. We assume this is a male, though we have no real proof, and if it is a male, he should feel the need to find a more suitable territory than he is in at present. We anticipate that he will leave to seek greener pastures, and hope that he will do so not in the Arboretum where not only is it no better than what he has now (indeed worse), but where he will be very unwelcome. We instead hope that he'll head off down the Canal to the Rideau River and beyond. I'll update the FWG web page on this animal, when we have more news of this little guy!

### References and More Information about Beaver:

- Darbyshire, Stephen and Laurie Consaul. 1999. Wildlife sometimes benefits from purple loosestrife. *T&L* 33:181-184.
- Forsyth, Adrian. 1985. *Mammals of the Canadian Wild*. Camden House Publishing, 352 pp.
- Tournay, Audrey. 2003. *Beaver Tales*. The Boston Mills Press. 168 pp.
- Hinterland Who's Who. 2005. *Mammal Fact Sheets: the Beaver*.  
<http://www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?id=82>

All images by C. Hanrahan.

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## In Memoriam

*Linda Jeays*

Believe in bones  
bleached vertebrae  
elongated skull  
skeleton parts scattered  
over a desolate mound

Imagine hunger assuaged  
tearing teeth and claws  
startled doe eyes  
futile struggle  
dying breath

Picture the moccasin flower  
neglecting spring sunshine  
heavy head bowed  
in lone and lovely tribute  
to needful sacrifice.

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# Fletcher's Annual Native Plant Sale

## *Fletcher Wildlife Garden*

In the spirit of “thinking globally and acting locally,” we can restore some of this destroyed habitat by using native plants to create wildlife-friendly backyards. Native plants provide the food and shelter that our native birds, mammals, butterflies and other insects, reptiles, and amphibians have adapted to over millions of years and rely on for their survival. Choose from a variety of beautiful flowers and attractive foliage and your garden—and the creatures that use it—will reward you all season.

The Fletcher Wildlife Garden's annual fundraiser is a good opportunity to learn more about native plant gardening, ask questions, get advice and buy plants not often found in local nurseries. Donations of native plants and seeds are always welcome (species native to Eastern Ontario only). Please bring them to the FWG any Friday morning or call 613-234-6767 or 613-730-0714, or email [fwg@ofnc.ca](mailto:fwg@ofnc.ca); we'd be happy to pick them up from you.

The sale will be **Saturday, June 5, 2010**, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden Parking Lot, east side of Prince of Wales Drive, south of the traffic circle. Map at <http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php>.

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# Harassed Owls

*Ian Whyte*

Recently, two friends and I spent two days on Amherst Island which is in Lake Ontario near Kingston, Ontario. For some reason raptors, especially owls, concentrate there in the winter. There is one special area called Owl woods, I'd guess is 25 hectares, which is heavily used by birders. At this season there is a couple of inches of snow on the ground and there are narrow trails tramped into it, crisscrossing the area.

The first day we were there, there were only a few people, and they all seemed to be respectful of the owls; few birds were flushed (the ones we heard about were done by a school group, who promptly mended their ways) and none were "crowded" that I saw or heard of. People were moving in small groups, mostly twos or threes, and were quiet.

The second day was quite different. In my opinion the owls were being severely harassed. There were Long-eared Owls flying everywhere, in contrast to the day before when they were roosting quietly. A Boreal Owl (10 inches long) had been found roosting at eye level, and there was a group of six or seven people there when we got there, all with photographic equipment, some of it very expensive, mounted on tripods or hand-held. The closest was about five feet from the bird, and the group made a kind of multilayer semi-circle around it. There was constant loudish talk and dozens of flashes, despite the fact that great pictures could be taken without flash. When asked how they could justify flashing a creature whose eyes were adapted to the dark, it was obvious that the question itself was incomprehensible to them. They wanted pictures; how could anything else matter? One whispered to another that, when all these people leave, he'd show the other something to get better pictures. Probably he was going to remove a few twigs and small branches which were in the way. Other people were walking dogs. There were several large groups walking through, making noise. And this was on a weekday, when only half a dozen cars were parked at the entrance; think how much worse it must be on the weekends, when there are many more cars parked there!

This time of year is hardship time for the wild things. Many of them are precariously close to death due to starvation; in fact, many do die over the winter. To prevent them from getting rest, to flush them or to harass them in any way can be fatal.

I wonder to myself how any “birder” can be so crass towards the object of their affection. We left the area with a kind of bad feeling about it. Even the first day was bad enough, from the owls point of view, but the second day was awful.

At the least, a sign should be erected at the entrance explaining the details of respectful behavior to the owls. (Really, in my opinion, the area should be closed to humans.)

**Editor’s Note:** The OFNC subscribes to a code of conduct which was published in *T&L* in 2009 (Volume 43, number 1) and on the OFNC website: [www.ofnc.ca/birding/Code-of-Conduct.pdf](http://www.ofnc.ca/birding/Code-of-Conduct.pdf). This code states that the welfare of the birds must come before our own interest, and that one should always respect the wildlife, the environment and other people. I thank Ian Whyte for bringing this situation to my attention.

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## Falcon Watch 2010

*Eve Ticknor*

Monitoring our Peregrine Falcon family will soon be here. Each year volunteers take turns watching young falcons take their first steps in the world, making sure they return safe at the end of each day.

Our season runs about three weeks, usually during the second half of June. We work in small groups and no prior experience is necessary. The pay is nonexistent but the rewards are limitless. It is an opportunity to help an endangered species, to increase public awareness and learn about falcons. It may also be considered volunteer time for high school students aged 16 or older. More information and notes on previous watches can be found on the OFNC website ([www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca)). Just follow the links to the falcon watch.

If you have a few hours to give, please contact Eve Ticknor at 613-737-7551 or 613-859-9545 or by email at [edticknor@sympatico.ca](mailto:edticknor@sympatico.ca).

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# The Ballad of the Eagle and the Forest Fire

*Murray Citron*

On a cliff in a forest overlooking the sea  
A nest—an eyrie—an eagle's nest perched,  
With three eaglets that their parents fed,  
And a forest fire toward them surged.

The father took the oldest chick  
In his claws to carry him over the sea,  
And half way across he paused and said,  
“When I am old and feeble, will you care for me?”

“Of course,” said the eaglet, “My duty is clear,  
To care for my father when I am grown.”  
“A lying child,” the father said,  
And dropped him into the sea to drown.

He returned for the second, and on his flight  
He asked again if his progeny  
Would care for his father in his old age.  
“Can you doubt it?” the chick said. “Certainly.”

“A foolish eaglet,” the father said,  
And dropped him into the raging main,  
And collected the last chick, and carried him,  
And asked his question once again.

“I am young,” said the chick. “And not yet fledged.  
I am too young to pledge, but I can say this,  
I have learned from my father, and I am sure  
I will care for my children as he cares for his.”

“This one understands,” said the father bird,  
“Our line will continue with such as he.”  
And the tough old eagle flapped his wings  
And carried his eaglet over the sea.

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## Errata in *Sympetrum* spp.

Chris Lewis

There was some confusion between two *Sympetrum* sp. in The Odonata Checklist for Britannia and Environs (Ottawa, Ontario). To clear up this conclusion, the current information is:

***Sympetrum seminiuctum* (Band-winged Meadowhawk) – BCA – scarce;**

OC – uncommon

Recorded in some years near MLP from late summer to mid-September. The few individuals encountered were likely fall migrants, as suitable breeding habitat is not represented in the BCA.

***Sympetrum vicinum* (Autumn Meadowhawk) – BCA – common; OC – common**

Recorded every year from early July to mid-October, with an extremely late date of 6 individuals on 12 November 2000 (The latest date for *any* odonate in OC is of one *S. vicinum* observed by Ken Allison near Almonte, ON, on 21 November 2009).

This species may be seen in the 1000s in late summer, most abundant along the margins of MLP and adjacent fields, as well as the vegetated shorelines of Britannia Bay.

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## The Doug Tarry Bird Study Awards for Young Ornithologists

Long Point Bird Observatory

This award offers people aged 13-17 “hands-on” training in field ornithology. Participants learn about bird systematics, avian behaviour and population dynamics. Regular field trips, slide shows and some nocturnal field work is included. The workshop is 10 days long and will be held 30 July - 8 August at the Long Point Bird Observatory.

Interested individuals can obtain information and application forms from:  
(<http://www.bsc-eoc.org/longpoint/index.jsp?targetpg=lpboyow&lang=EN>).

**Deadline for applications is 30 April.**

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# High on the Big Stone Heart

## And further Adventures in the Boreal Heartland

*Karen McLachlan Hamilton*

*High on the Big Stone Heart* is one of a series of writings by Charles Wilkins. This book is a collection of stories, most of which were written for various magazines. The common theme, as you may have guessed, pertains to northern Ontario, Québec and parts of Manitoba and the Yukon. The stories encompass a wide range of experiences from what goes into building a good wooden boat, to great fishing antidotes, to a historic journey from Sault Ste Marie to Thunder Bay. Some sections may be considered controversial, the story of Murray Monk, for example. His views on trapping and the fur industry may not reflect the views of most readers. While others are reminiscences of cottage life as a child, while others are cautionary tales of winter living.

My favourite piece happened to be the first chapter where Wilkins described how he survived in the wilderness with nothing but what he was wearing. It seemed doable, after all what was six days. Apparently six very long days if you are not prepared. Imagine if it was not by choice, with no idea where you are or how you will get out.

Charles' writing style was easy to read and nicely paced. I could pick up the book when I had a few spare moments and be able to read a chapter or two. The book has a little of everything, which would appeal to a wide variety of readers. For these reasons, I think it would make a great cottage book. It could be something visitors could pick up and read bits from it and, perhaps, be something that could become a conversation starter.

The book contains 182 pages and sells for \$24.99. It is published by Dundurn Press and is available at [www.dundurn.com](http://www.dundurn.com).

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# Bird Highlights from the 50K and Environs July – December 2009

*Chris Lewis*

The last six months of 2009 provided some interesting highlights, with weather no doubt influencing the activities of birds and birders alike. July was the coolest, wettest month on record, but we were more than compensated by the spectacular fall season that followed and extended even into the first week of December.

## **Waterfowl**

**Greater White-fronted Geese** have always been annual low-density migrants through our region in spring and fall. This season, at least three individuals were seen from the third week of September through mid-November at locations that are “waterfowl magnets” (the Ottawa River off Andrew Haydon Park, the cornfields near Navan, and the large quarry pond along Moodie Dr. south of the Trail Rd. waste facility). A couple of out of season **Snow Geese** were spotted at the Alfred lagoons on 14 July and in the Britannia Bay area from 23-27 July. Small flocks of Snow’s were reported in September and October and the larger flocks began to move through at the end of October with up to 15,000 arriving and remaining in the Casselman/Moose Creek area until the beginning of December. **Ross’s Geese** continue to be annual visitors, and this season three individuals were found from 10-20 October. A single **Brant** had an exceptionally long sojourn at Andrew Haydon Park from 10 July to at least 01 November, and several hundred flew over, or dropped in, during their more typical time from mid-October to early November. Many reports of **Cackling Geese** came in, mainly in October and November—most were of singletons, however groups of up to nine of these tiny fellows were found among the hordes of **Canada Geese**. October 12, 2009 will go down in local birding history as the first time six species of geese were found in one day—not just in the 50K but in eastern Ontario!

Ducks of note included a male **Eurasian Wigeon** (unusual in fall in Ottawa) at Constance Creek on 17 October, and large flocks of several hundred, mostly male, **Black Scoters** (23 October) and **Long-tailed Ducks** (01 November) on the **Ottawa River**. The first fall report of **Barrow’s Goldeneye** was of a male on the river at Remic Rapids; subsequently, two males and one female settled for the winter on the Rideau River near the Rideau Tennis Club. The Ottawa-Gatineau Christmas Bird

Count on 20 December revealed that a few hardy species such as **Wood Duck**, **Green-winged Teal** and **Ring-necked Duck** were still around.

#### **Gallinaceous Birds, Loons, Grebes, Cormorants and Herons**

The quest for the locally declining **Gray Partridge** continued to be a challenge; in mid-December a couple of coveys were seen in the Richmond and Kanata areas. **Ruffed Grouse** were also hard to find this year as it has been a low cycle for our local population. By contrast, **Wild Turkeys** are going forth and multiplying on both the Ontario and Québec sides of the 50K and record numbers were recorded on all of the local fall and Christmas bird counts. This species is doing very well and is apparently here to stay despite some very cold and snowy winters since it was introduced into the 50K more than 10 years ago.

**Red-throated Loons** began to move through in the third week of October and on 06 November 48 were seen on the Ottawa River off Andrew Haydon Park. A few late stragglers were seen here until 22 November. For the first time in several years, **Pied-billed Grebes** with young were noted on Mud Lake in Britannia. The fourth consecutive year for the breeding colony of **Double-crested Cormorants** was a successful one on the small islet north of the Lemieux Island water purification plant; at least 18 pairs nested here this year and numerous young were observed in mid-July.

Visits to Constance Creek in early July were productive for the secretive **Least Bittern**. Reports of **Great Egrets** came from widespread locations throughout July and August and two lingered at a favourite fall feeding site (Shirleys Bay) until at least 06 October. Multiple **Green Herons** and **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were widely reported into mid-September, and a couple of late **Great Blue Herons** were still around in late December even after temperatures dipped well below normal.

#### **Raptors**

Hardly a week went by without a report of **Bald Eagles** in the 50K and record high numbers were recorded on the Ottawa-Gatineau and Pakenham-Arnprior Christmas Bird Counts. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** (mid-late December) in Aylmer, Québec was possibly the same bird that wintered here previously. **Rough-legged Hawks** began to appear in mid-October but evidently moved out as the year wore on. A good number (for our region) of migrating **Golden Eagles** were reported in fall. **American Kestrels** remained scarce except in rural areas. **Merlins** continued to flourish in urban and suburban neighbourhoods, both adult and immature **Peregrine Falcons** were widely reported, and a highlight on 20 December was a **Gyr Falcon** at the Carlington quarry.

## **Rails, Gallinules, Coots and Cranes**

**Virginia Rails, Common Moorhens and American Coots** were all well-represented in their breeding habitats, and reports of **Sandhill Cranes** included pairs seen flying over the Mer Bleue boardwalk as well as in fields near Lanark from August through mid-October. The annual autumn spectacle of multiple cranes was particularly impressive this year, with a **record high number of nearly 100** feeding in the cornfields southeast of Navan on 14 November, and at least 48 were still present on 01 December.

## **Shorebirds**

The beginnings of southbound shorebird migration occurred in July, with several species moving through quite early. A **Western Sandpiper** at the Almonte sewage lagoons on 19 July was a **first July record** for the 50K. Also unusual for this month were a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at the St. Albert lagoons on the 14<sup>th</sup>, a **Dunlin** at the Embrun lagoons from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup>, a **Short-billed Dowitcher** at Embrun from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>, and an adult **Long-billed Dowitcher** in nearly full breeding plumage at St. Albert on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>.

Water levels on the lagoons and the Ottawa River were very high in August, providing less than ideal feeding habitat. Nevertheless, a good selection of waders continued to drop in, with 13 species reported by the middle of the month. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, strong east winds and heavy local showers from tropical storm "Danny" prompted a nice wave of migrants on the 30<sup>th</sup> including brief visits by 68 **American Golden Plovers** at a sod farm south of Osgoode and two **Red Phalaropes** at the Embrun lagoons. Reduced water and more exposed mud in September brought in more variety including the **first fall 50K record** of a **Marbled Godwit** that lingered at Shirleys Bay for more than three weeks (17 September - 10 October). While species such as **Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Least and Pectoral Sandpiper** occurred in good numbers, and both species of **Dowitchers** as well as several **Red-necked Phalaropes** were found in several locations during the peak of their migration time, a mystery was the dearth of **Semipalmated Sandpipers** that are normally common in our region in fall.

## **Gulls and Terns**

Two rarities briefly appeared on the Ottawa River—an immature **Little Gull** at the Deschênes Rapids on 02 September, and an adult **Black-legged Kittiwake** off Andrew Haydon Park on 28 November. Unusually late for our region were 36 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at the Embrun lagoons on 09 November; two were still present here until 05 December. Observations of single **Thayer's Gulls** came from Andrew Haydon Park on 07 November and the Trail Rd. waste facility on 18 December, and a "**Nelson's Gull**" (**Herring X Glaucous hybrid**) was spotted at the Nepean

Equestrian Park on 28 November. A few **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** began to show up in August and September, and by 21 October there were 16 mainly adult birds in the vicinity of Trail Rd. and the Moodie Dr. quarry pond. By mid-December, good numbers of **Iceland** and **Glaucous Gulls** were present. **Great Black-backed Gulls** continue to be seen in increasing numbers and seem to be arriving earlier and staying longer every year, a significant change in their status in the 50K within the last 20 years. **Caspian Terns** are still rare passers-through our area—on 09 July two were fishing on the river between the Fitzroy and Quyon ferry docks, one was seen at Remie Rapids on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and during the first week of August two lingered for a couple of days at sod farm south of Osgoode.

### **Owls, Goatsuckers and Woodpeckers**

The most significant local owl discovery was a family of **Great Gray Owls** on a private property in the Kinburn/Fitzroy area this summer. Not only was this the **first breeding record for the 50K**, but apparently the **southernmost in Canada**. A pair nested in a massive White Birch and fledged three young; the property owner wisely chose not to broadcast the location. Later, on 01 September, a single Great Gray was seen near Fitzroy Harbour, and the observer was also admirably circumspect about sharing this information.

A few **Snowy Owls** began to move into our region in mid-November. Well before there was any trace of snow or ice on the Ottawa River, one was seen at the Dick Bell marina, being harassed by the classic finders of owls (**American Crows**) on 30 November. A half-dozen Snowy's arrived in mid-December, in the Ste-Rose-de-Prescott area which has become a common wintering area in recent years, and another was seen near Richmond on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The Richmond/Munster area continued to be a traditional site for **Great Horned**, **Barred** and **Long-eared Owls**. **Short-eared Owls** were obviously still attracted to the fields south of the international airport as well as along Wall Rd. near Navan. Mid-October is typically prime time for **Northern Saw-whet Owl** migration and this year 10 were banded on one night (15 October) at the Innis Point Bird Observatory.

From the middle of August through the first week of September **Common Nighthawks** migrated through, with an impressive flock of 56 seen on the evening of 22 August in Carp. For the eighth consecutive year, **Red-headed Woodpeckers** bred in Constance Bay; two adults and two juveniles were seen here on 02 September. On 06 September, a female **Red-bellied Woodpecker** was found in Deschênes, and two months later (05-06 November) a male was discovered near Constance Bay. **Black-backed Woodpeckers** were one-day wonders along the Rideau Trail off Richmond Rd. (13 October) and along a trail near the Aviation Parkway and Ogilvie Rd. (20 December). A bizarre sight on 03 September was an

almost ritualistic posturing display between two male **Pileated Woodpeckers** on the lawn at the Britannia water purification plant. Apparently oblivious to several observers, they faced off and followed each other around for over an hour.

### **Passerines**

Songbird migration was quite lively from late July through early October. Among the most popular subjects were **Olive-sided** and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**—at least one of each turned up in the Britannia Conservation Area and the Fletcher Wildlife Garden in the third week of August. A large movement of **Blue-headed Vireos** occurred in late September; over 25 were reported from Deschênes on the 19-20 September, and a **record late date** for this species was 08 December when an individual was seen in Rothwell Heights—*after* the first major snowstorm of the season! A report of a **Gray Jay** near a ravine in Hull adjacent to Gatineau Park on 09 November was interesting, as was the discovery of a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** at Britannia on 22 August. Another indication of how “common” the **Common Raven** has become in the region was a record high number of 124 found on the Ottawa-Gatineau Christmas Bird Count; this was more than double the previous record high. A **Carolina Wren** discovered in Kanata in October was reported again in December, and another in Hull was present for the Christmas Bird Count and remained well into the New Year. Six very late **Marsh Wrens** were a surprise on the Fall Bird Count in the third week of October in a marsh near Petrie Island. Whereas **American Robins** are well known as harbingers of spring, many actually spend the entire winter in areas where there are plenty of berries to sustain them. A good number were still around at the end of the year, and one roving flock in Britannia on 18 October was accompanied by a rare **Varied Thrush**. Multitudes of **Cedar Waxwings** in late summer moved on by early fall, and the arrival of **Bohemian Waxwings** began in the first week of November. Never predictable, but always a pleasure to see, numbers of these erratic wanderers built up in December and nearly a thousand were tallied on the Ottawa-Gatineau Christmas Bird Count.

At the end of July, migrant **warblers** began to move through, with many on the early side such as **Tennessee**, **Northern Parula**, **Bay-breasted** and **Canada**. By the third week of August, 20 species had been reported and on the 31<sup>st</sup>, a brief visit by a rare **Connecticut Warbler** was noted in the Britannia Conservation Area. A **record late Blackpoll Warbler** lingered at Dick Bell Park from 07-16 November, and although it's not unheard of for **Common Yellowthroats** to be found in December, two were seen in that month this year—one at Britannia on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and another at Stratheona Park along the Rideau River from the 19<sup>th</sup> to at least the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Sparrow reports were interesting as well. A late **Eastern Towhee** was spotted in the Kanata Lakes area on 09 November. In mid-September, seven species including

**Clay-coloured, Field and Grasshopper** were still occupying their territories in the fields south of the international airport, and a **Nelson's Sparrow** (formerly Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow) was unusually accommodating at Shirleys Bay from 20-21 September. **Lapland Longspurs** were first reported near St-Isidore on 05 October, 40 were seen near Winchester on the 12<sup>th</sup>, 15 flew by the Shirley's Bay boat launch on the 25<sup>th</sup>, and several were found in the Ste-Rose area in mid-December.

A bird that had a lot of people scratching their heads was a vivid **RED Baltimore Oriole** in the Britannia Conservation Area on 30-31 August. Evidently this unusual colouration is probably diet-related, due to *Rhodoxanthin*, a chemical found in the berries of introduced species of Honeysuckle.

It soon became obvious that this was not a season for any significant movement of "winter finches," not only in the 50K but all over southern Ontario. In this case, it was not weather but food that influenced their absence. Without good conc and seed crops to bring them south, there was no compelling reason for them to move in for the winter. Even **Evening Grosbeaks** were not widespread and, just like last winter, a feeding station in Poland west of Lanark seemed to be the only location to which they gravitated in large numbers; from mid-October to 01 December, the property owner counted in excess of 50 birds. Otherwise, apart from our resident species such as **House Finches** and **American Goldfinches**, by the end of the year all signs pointed to a virtually finch-less winter.

The information in this article was derived from a variety of sources including the OFNC Bird Status Line (613-860-9000), [sightings@ofnc.ca](mailto:sightings@ofnc.ca), personal observations and communications, postings to the Ontario Field Ornithologists listserv (Ontbirds), and reports from Québec. For more information about the OFNC and its activities, please call 613-722-3050 or visit the Club's website at [www.ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca). Sincere thanks to all who contributed their bird sightings.

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## National Capital Region Wildlife Festival Events

### **April 1 to September 1**

Gatineau Park Visitors' Centre, 33 Scott Street, Chelsea.

Club de photographie Polarisé presents an exhibit of photographs entitled Native Plants Throughout the Seasons. The exhibit will showcase 20 photographs which will promote a better understanding of which plants are native to our region.

Information: 819-827-2020; 800-465-1867.

### **Wednesday April 7, 6 to 9:30 p.m.**

Canadian Museum of Nature, Metcalfe and McLeod Streets.

Celebrate National Wildlife Week with a Forum on Biodiversity. Join us for a thought-provoking evening as Ole Hendrickson (Biodiversity Convention Office), Gary Neilsen (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources) and Stephen McCanny (Parks Canada), discuss what Biodiversity means, how climate change will impact on biodiversity, and how invasive species affect our native ecosystems. There will be a slide presentation, information tables, displays, handouts and refreshments.

Information: 613-831-2253; [www.ncrwildlifefestival.org](http://www.ncrwildlifefestival.org).

### **Thursday April 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Public Library—Stittsville Branch, 1637 Stittsville Main.

See the presentation by Sharon Kirsch, author of *What Species of Creatures: Animal Relations from the New World*. Ever imagined sleeping with a muskrat up your sleeve or building a lodge for your pet beaver? Sharon reveals some startling encounters between the first European visitors to the northern New World and the wild animals they befriended. Free admission.

Reservations and information: 613-836-3381.

### **Saturday April 10, 9 to 11 a.m.**

Nepean Sportsplex, Assembly Hall F, 1701 Woodroffe Avenue.

The Canadian Wildlife Federation invites you to join their free guided "Walk for Wildlife" and explore native birds, plants and wildlife in the Pinhey Forest.

Registration begins at 9 a.m. in the Sportsplex. The walk begins at 10:00 a.m., followed by a wrap-up reception with refreshments. Free parking.

Information: 613-599-9594 ext. 250; [www.nationalwildlifeweek.ca](http://www.nationalwildlifeweek.ca).

### **Monday April 12, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Public Library—Carlingwood Branch, 281 Woodroffe Avenue.

Located above the 74<sup>th</sup> parallel north, directly on the North-West Passage, Somerset Island is the 12<sup>th</sup> largest island in Canada. Each summer, individuals travel to this uninhabited island hoping to witness a unique ritual: hundreds, if not thousands, of belugas congregating in the Cunningham Inlet estuary. Belugas come here to rub against the rocky bottom to molt their skin. How not to be bitten by the Arctic Bug in front of such a gripping show? Join France Rivet for the exciting presentation, *Somerset Island: White Ghosts Country*. Free admission.

Reservations and information: 613-725-2449.

**Tuesday April 13, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Public Library—Centrepointe Branch, 101 Centrepointe Drive.  
Join the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary for a presentation on rehabilitating wildlife and learn of their efforts to rehabilitate injured, sick or orphaned wildlife, including lots of success stories and photos of ones they have rescued. The knowledgeable presenter will include tips on how to coexist with wildlife, prevent and solve common problems, and how to help wildlife that needs rescuing. Free admission. Reservations and information: 613-580-2710.

**Thursday April 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Public Library—Alta Vista Public Branch, 2516 Alta Vista Drive.  
Travel the northern circle, past glaciers and snowy mountains to the ancient lands of Asia with Roy John, the Canadian Field-Naturalists' Book Review Editor and avid eco-traveler. See the wildlife of the northern ocean and sample a little of Russia, Korea and Japan before visiting China's amazing heritage. Free admission. Reservations and information: 613-737-2837.

**Friday April 16 (English) and Friday April 30 (French), 7 to 10 p.m.**

Gatineau Park Visitors Centre, 33 Scott Road, Chelsea QC.  
Friends of Gatineau Park present The Dusk Series 2010 - Frog Chorus: Spring is in the air and frog songs are filling the night! Join them for their popular evening program, Frog Chorus. Rob Alvo, an amphibian specialist will introduce you to amphibians of Gatineau Park and their different calls with an indoor presentation. Afterwards, we will go into the Park, enjoy the concert first hand and identify who is who! All participants receive a free CD of frog calls from the Frogwatch Programme! Adults \$15 (Members \$12), Seniors/Students \$12 (Members \$10), Children \$5. Information and Registration: 819-827-2020;  
<http://www.friendsofgatineaupark.ca>.

**Saturday April 17, 10 a.m. to Noon**

Cliffland Clifford Family Protected Wilderness, 502 Hills of Peace, Lanark.  
Enjoy 5 km of relatively easy to moderate hiking on the Earth Day Walk to Blueberry Mountain, one of the seven wonders of Lanark County. This guided walk will include a dramatization of the life of John Muir and participants will be rewarded with a very scenic outlook from the top of the mountain.  
Information: 613-259-3412.

**Monday April 19, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Public Library—Elmvalle Branch, 1910 St. Laurent Boulevard.  
Join the Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary for a presentation on rehabilitating wildlife and learn of their efforts to rehabilitate injured, sick or orphaned wildlife, including lots of success stories. The knowledgeable presenter will include tips on how to coexist, prevent and solve common problems, and how to help wildlife that needs rescuing. Free admission.  
Reservations and information: 613-738-0619.

**Tuesday April 20, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

Ottawa Public Library—Hazeldean Library, 50 Castlefrank Road.

Follow Roy John, Canadian Field-Naturalists' Book Review Editor and ardent eco-traveler, in the steps of William Bligh to the exotic islands of the South Seas. See some of the colourful flowers, birds and fish that make these islands so special. Free admission. Reservations and information: 613-592-2712.

**Saturday April 24**

RA Centre, 2452 Riverside Drive.

The Seventh Annual Ottawa Eco-Stewardship Fair. Organizations throughout the region celebrate green living. Explore new products and ideas in energy, local food, health, outdoor recreation, home and garden, beauty and fashion, nature, transportation and eco-tourism. Over 100 exhibitors, food demonstrations, seminars, children's activities, popular 100-mile lunch and more. Free admission and parking. Information: 613-321-6193; [www.ottawaecofair.ca](http://www.ottawaecofair.ca).

**Saturday April 24, 8 a.m.**

Entrance to the Britannia Filtration Plant on Cassels Street.

Dave Moore and Bev McBride of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club lead a general interest nature walk through the Britannia Conservation Area. Limited to 15 people. Information and Registration: 613-729-9330; [redstart@vif.com](mailto:redstart@vif.com).

**Sunday April 25, 2 p.m.**

McCarthy Woods, Riverside Park/Hunt Club.

A nature walk with Lynn Kaplansky through a small but diverse urban forest with huge hardwoods, carpets of spring flowers and many signs of wild inhabitants. Easy trails but some may be muddy. Meet in mall parking lot at McCarthy Rd. and Paul Anka Dr. Information: 613-731-6141.

**Saturday April 24 and Sunday April 25**

Nature Walk Weekend with some of the region's best nature interpreters leading guided tours to some of the most interesting nature trails in the region.

Information: 613-831-2253; [www.ncrwildlifefestival.org](http://www.ncrwildlifefestival.org).

**Friday April 30th, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

Rockcliffe Park Community Centre, 380 Springfield Road.

Join environmental educator and naturalist, Diana "Cedar" Brushey for this fun, family-friendly learning evening: Nature Nights: Brilliant Birds. Come see pictures of some of the world's most interesting winged wonders, play a game, and hear myths, legends, and anecdotes about Canada's brilliant birds and learn why they really aren't "bird brains." Each session starts with a narrated slide show and is followed by an interactive discussion, activities, and hands-on exploration of nature's treasures. For 5 years and up. Cost is \$10 per family.

Information and registration: 613-842-8578; [www.canadianaunlimited.ca](http://www.canadianaunlimited.ca).

Information obtained herein was obtained from the National Capital Region Wildlife Festival website ([www.ncrwildlifefestival.org/frameset.html](http://www.ncrwildlifefestival.org/frameset.html)).

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# Coming Events

arranged by the Excursions & Lectures Committee.

For further information,  
call the Club number (613-722-3050).

*Times stated for excursions are departure times. Please arrive earlier; leaders start promptly. If you need a ride, don't hesitate to ask the leader. Restricted trips will be open to non-members only after the indicated deadlines.*

**ALL OUTINGS:** *Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.*

**REGISTERED BUS TRIPS:** *Make your reservation for Club bus excursions by sending a cheque or money order (Payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club) to Box 35069, Westgate P.O., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Z 1A2, at least ten days in advance. Include your name, address, telephone number and the name of the outing. Your cooperation is appreciated by the Committee so that we do not have to wait until the last moment to decide whether a trip should be cancelled due to low registration. In order for the Club to offer a bus trip, we need just over 33 people to register. If fewer than 30 register, we have the option of cancelling the trip or increasing the cost. Such decisions must be done a week in advance, so we encourage anyone who is interested in any bus trip to register as early as possible. We also wish to discourage postponing the actual payment of bus fees until the day of the event.*

**EVENTS AT THE CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE:** *The Club is grateful to the Museum for their cooperation, and thanks the Museum for the use of these excellent facilities. Monthly meetings are held in The Discovery Zone Theatre on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor. Attendees may have to pay \$5 parking per vehicle.*

**BIRD STATUS LINE:** *Phone 613-860-9000 to learn of recent sightings or birding potential in the Ottawa area. To report recent sightings use the 613-860-9000 number and stay on the line. This service is run on behalf of the Birds Committee and is available to members and non-members.*

Sunday  
11 April  
8:00 a.m.

### SPRING WATERFOWL—EAST OF OTTAWA

**Leader:** Mark Gawn

**Meat:** Costco on Cyrville Rd. Park on the north side of the building facing Innes Rd. The Innes Road exit is just past the split on Highway 417 as you head towards Montreal.

Join us as we head to the flooded fields east of Ottawa for an all-day outing. If water levels are high we will spend most of our day in the fields between the Milton Road area and Bourget. If water levels are low, we will get inventive, going to lagoons if they are not frozen, or birding along the river if that area holds the most promise. With luck we will see most species of spring ducks and geese as well as Sandhill Cranes.

Note: early April is a dynamic time of year for birds. If other areas are "hot," the leader may choose to go somewhere else.

Our meetings for **April 13**, and **May 11** will be held at the **K.W. Neatby Building, Salon B, Central Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Avenue.**

Parking is available in a lot just east of the building.

Tuesday  
13 April  
7:00 p.m.  
Social & Club  
business

#### OFNC MONTHLY MEETING

#### ORIBATID MITES: A KEY COMPONENT OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEALTH OF SOILS

**Speaker:** Valerie Behan-Pelletier

**Location:** K.W. Neatby Building, Salon B, Central  
Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Avenue.

7:30 p.m.  
Speaker

Soil is integral to human well-being; it is the surface we live on and the basis for all life on dry land. Soil is also the critical transition between the Earth's ecosystems; processes occurring in the top few centimetres of Earth's surface can impact the aquatic and marine ecosystems. Healthy soils are teeming with life; the biological complexity within a few cubic centimetres of forest soil rivals that of a coral reef. There is general agreement among ecologists that the diverse species living in soil provide essential ecosystem services, including carbon and nutrient cycling, enhancement of plant growth, mitigation of diseases, biological control, and development of soil structure. Oribatid mites are an important component of this diversity. This talk will illustrate the latest knowledge on the biological complexity of oribatid mites and their ecology. It will focus on their extensive defense mechanisms, their reproductive strategies, and their diversity in soil habitats in forest, grasslands and arctic systems in Canada. It will show why they are among the charismatic microfauna.

**Saturday**  
**17 April**  
**7:30 p.m.**

### **OFNC SOIRÉE**

**Meet:** St. Basil's Church, off Maitland, just north of the Queensway.

This is our party evening when we shall be honouring important members of our Club, hosting an art and photography contest, and highlighting activities of the Macoun Field Club.

Refreshments will be served. Check the centrefold for details.

**Saturday**  
**24 April**  
**8:00 a.m.**

### **SPRING IN CONSTANCE BAY**

**Leaders:** Jeff Skevington (613-832-1970) and Susan Howell

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot near Pizza Pizza, Richmond Road at Assaly Road.

People in the west end can go directly to Constance Bay and meet at 146 Monty Drive at 8:30 a.m.

This is a full day outing with a focus on Constance Bay. Susan will meet the group, set up car pooling, and bring everyone out to Constance Bay to meet up with Jeff. Bring a field lunch and expect to be home by about 4:00 p.m. Constance Bay is a lot of fun in late April. Early warblers (Pine and Yellow-rumped for example), Common Loon, Red-shouldered Hawk, Virginia Rail, Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, and lots of sparrows including Fox, Chipping and White-throated should all be back. If we get a sunny day, it should be fun for insect watching, too. Late April is a great time to see early butterflies and a variety of insects that cannot be seen the rest of the year. Some of the pussy willows will be loaded with pollinating insects if the day is warm enough. Early season frogs, salamanders and some early season flowers are also possible, depending on how advanced the season is. After exploring the Bay, we will take three or four hours to get back to Ottawa by stopping at sites along the river, Constance Bay and Ottawa Beach.

**Sunday**  
**9 May**  
**7:30 a.m.**

### **SPRING RAMBLE AT THE MILL OF KINTAIL**

**Leader:** Connie Clark (613-729-1815)

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot near Pizza Pizza, Richmond Road at Assaly Road.

At this time of year, the spring ephemeral flowers make their glorious but very brief appearance. Trilliums, Hepaticus, Spring Beauty, Squirrel Corn, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Wild Ginger, Blue Cohosh, Bellworts, Adder's Tongue, and Toothworts are just a few of the flowers we have a good chance of seeing.

Mourning Cloak Butterflies and Garter Snakes are another possibility. The trail may be muddy in some places so bring proper footwear. A snack is also a good idea. This trip will be cancelled if it rains on the day of the trip.

Note: This meeting is held at the **K.W. Neatby Building, Salon B, Central Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Avenue** (Parking is available in a lot just east of this building). We shall return to the refurbished **Canadian Museum of Nature**, for our last meeting of the season, **June 8, 2010**.

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>OFNC MONTHLY MEETING</b>
<b>11 May</b>	<b>ANTARCTICA: FIRST JOURNEY—WILDLIFE OF</b>
<b>7:00 p.m.</b>	<b>SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND AND THE ANTARCTIC</b>
<b>Social &amp; Club</b>	<b>PENINSULA</b>
<b>business</b>	<b>Speaker:</b> Geoff Carpentier
	<b>Location:</b> K.W. Neatby Building, Salon A, 960 Carling Avenue.
<b>7:30 p.m.</b>	Until recently, Antarctica was only a place people dreamed about. With the advent of modern travel opportunities, anyone can go and many do! Geoff will take you on a journey to South Georgia Island, which is revered as the burial spot of Ernest Shackleton and the place where many wildlife adventures are filmed about elephant seals, penguins and albatrosses. Then travel to the Antarctic Peninsula, where he will introduce you to the scenery, the ice and snow, seals, whales and penguins.
<b>Speaker</b>	

**Wednesday**  
**12 May**  
**5:30 p.m.**  
**to**  
**8:00 p.m.**

**EVENING IN THE MARSH—A BEGINNER'S BIRD WALK AT THE BILL MASON CENTRE**  
**Leader:** Terry Higgins  
**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot near Pizza Pizza, Richmond Road at Assaly Road **OR** at 6:00 p.m. in the parking lot of the Bill Mason Centre, 3088 Dunrobin Road.

The Bill Mason Centre consists of 31 hectares of forests, meadows, and wetlands and is located next to West Carleton Secondary School at 3088 Dunrobin Road. The Bill Mason Centre's extensive boardwalks and trails are well maintained and easy to walk on. The boardwalk should offer beginner birders opportunities to hear and observe wetland species such as Virginia Rail, Sora, Red-winged Blackbird and Swamp Sparrow. We hope to observe the aerial displays of American Woodcock and Wilson's Snipe. If we are very lucky, we may even hear Whip-poor-wills calling. As this is a spring walk through a marsh, please bring waterproof footwear and bug repellent.

**Thursday**

**13 May**

**to**

**Sunday**

**16 May**

### **POINTE PELEE NATIONAL PARK**

Our Club's next trip to Pointe Pelee will take place during the spring migration of 2010. The cost is \$450 for accommodation for three nights at the Comfort Inn in Leamington, based on double occupancy, and includes breakfasts, bus transportation and taxes. A down payment of \$100 will secure your place on this trip; book early to avoid disappointment. Call the Club number 613-722-3050; mail your cheque to OFNC, Box 35069, Westgate P.O. As we did last time, we plan to shop for, and serve, two buffet lunches and will be asking for \$14 per person, on the bus, for those wishing to participate. People bringing their own lunches are invited to join us for drinks, fruits and snacks at \$4 each. Dinners will be at several local restaurants.

**Sunday**

**16 May**

**7:00 a.m.**

**to**

**12 noon**

### **BIRDING THE "PEAK" (OF MIGRATION, NOT A MOUNTAIN)**

**Leader:** Bernie Ladouceur

**Meet:** Parking area on Cassels Street, outside the entrance to the Britannia Filtration Plant.

We will spend most of the morning birding the Mud Lake Conservation Area in Britannia. The emphasis will be on enjoying the colours and sounds of songbird migration. Depending on the day, we may choose to visit a second west-end location. Bring a drink and a snack, if you think you will need it. We'll go rain, shine or snow!

**Tuesday**

**18 May**

**7:30 a.m.**

### **BIRDING AT BRITANNIA**

**Leaders:** Patrick Blake and Jeff Skevington (613-832-1970)

**Meet:** Outside the gate to the Britannia Filtration Plant along Cassels Road.

Experience the diversity of Ottawa's birds at the peak of spring migration during this morning outing. Late May is typically superb for migrants at Britannia. Expect to see a good variety of warblers, sparrows, flycatchers and others. Study the subtle differences between similar species. Learn more about e-bird as a method for making all of your birding observations relevant and available for scientific study. It's a great way to maintain your lists, too!

**Saturday**  
**22 May**  
**7:15 p.m.**

### **INSECT COLLECTING AT NIGHT**

**Leaders:** Diane Lepage (613-741-5179) and Fenja Brodo (613-723-2054)

**Meet:** Stony Swamp, Moodie Drive, Beaver Trail, Parking lot No. 8 (near the hydro lines). Participants needing a ride should call one of the leaders.

Discover the amazing insect night-life in Stony Swamp, especially the fantastic moths that come to the black lights from dusk to dawn (we won't stay that long!). We will set up sheets and battery-powered lights and wait for the fun to begin. Bring flashlights and bug repellent. If it is raining, this will be postponed to the following weekend. Call one of the leaders to confirm if the weather is questionable.

**Rain date:**  
**Saturday**  
**29 May**

**Sunday**  
**23 May**  
**6:00 a.m.**  
**to**  
**12 noon**

### **SPRING SONGBIRDS OF LAROSE FOREST**

**Leader:** John Cartwright (613-789-6714)

**Meet:** Southeast corner of Elmvale Shopping Centre parking lot (corner of St. Laurent Blvd. and Smyth Rd), and there we will arrange carpooling.

During this outing, we will spend most of the morning at Larose Forest and will focus on identifying birds by song (although we will certainly try to see them as well). By this time in May, most songbirds will have arrived at their breeding grounds, and the males will be busy staking out their territories. We should find a good selection of warblers and thrushes, as well as cuckoos, flycatchers, sparrows and several other groups. If time permits, we will also look for some field birds on our way back to Ottawa. This trip will go in any weather up to light showers. For further details, call John.

**Saturday**

**29 May**

**7:30 a.m.**

**to**

**12 noon**

**Rain date:**

**Wednesday**

**2 June**

### **BIRDING IN THE SOUTH END**

**Leader:** Gord Belyea (613-736-7051)

**Meet:** Take Albion Road south from Bank Street (approximately 4 km), turn west (right) onto Leirtrim Road and proceed for approximately 2 km, turn south (left) on Bowesville Road and continue for about 200 metres to the parking space on the left side of Bowesville Road where the closed portion of High Road meets Bowesville Road (The location can be found on Google Maps, Mapquest, or on an up-to-date City of Ottawa map ).

The fields to the south of the Airport offer one of the most diverse populations of sparrows in the area. We could expect to see Song, Savannah, Field, Chipping, Grasshopper, Vesper, Clay-Coloured, and possibly White Throat and Swamp Sparrows on this walk. Other possibilities include Indigo Buntings, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlark, Tree Swallow, and Black-Billed Cuckoo. There is also an important Bluebird Trail in this area.

**Sunday**

**30 May**

**7:30 a.m.**

**to**

**12 noon**

### **GEOLOGY, BIRDS, AND LATE VERNAL WILDFLOWERS ALONG THE LAURIAULT TRAIL AND KINGSMERE ESTATE**

**Leader:** Geof Burbidge and Fenja Brodo (613-723-2054)

**Meet:** In front of the Supreme Court, Wellington St. for carpooling **OR** at 8:00 a.m. at the Lauriault Trail parking lot, off the Champlain Parkway (across from the Mulvihill Lake lot). (There's an outhouse at this spot).

**Directions:** Take Hwy. 5 north to the Old Chelsea exit, continue through Old Chelsea towards Meech Lake for 1.2 km, then turn left on the Gatineau Parkway for 5 km, then right on the Champlain Parkway (confusingly misnamed "Prom de la Gatineau" on Google Maps) for 3 km. **OR** take the Gatineau Parkway from Hull, and turn left on the Champlain Parkway for 3 km. (Note: Kingsmere Rd. does NOT join the Champlain Parkway as indicated in Google Maps and possibly some GPS units). **IF FOR SOME REASON, THE KINGSMERE PARKWAY IS CLOSED**, we'll meet instead at the main (upper) Kingsmere parking lot (P6). Go south on Kingsmere Road just west of Old Chelsea for 2.5 km, left on Swamp, right on Barnes, and left into P6 (lot fees are not collected from early birds).

This will be a fairly easy (some stair climbing and a few short moderately steep sections) 5 km amble through wet hemlock and dry upland mixed deciduous forest at the edge of the Eardley Escarpment high above the Ottawa Valley, through one of the richest and most diverse vernal wildflower carpets in the area. We will try to identify common flower species as they are entering their annual seed and berry stage. We will watch (and listen!) for late avian migrants, look for breeding evidence of Scarlet Tanager, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, several species of vireo, and check on the location where a Louisiana Waterthrush has been seen and heard this time of year. We will discuss the tectonic setting of the region, the minerals and rock types along the trail, examine radioactive outcrops and some very interesting geological features of the building stones in the famous ruins on the Kingsmere Estate. Fisher and black bear signs are quite possible on this trail. A pair of binoculars, a pocket knife and a magnifying glass would be useful.

**Wednesday**  
**2 June**  
**6:30 p.m.**  
**to**  
**dark**

#### **"RAPID" BIRDING**

**Leader:** Bernie Ladouceur

**Meet:** Parking area on Cassels Street, outside the entrance to the Britannia Filtration Plant.

We will be checking the Deschênes Rapids and Mud Lake for gulls, terns, herons and cormorants. There should be Bonaparte's Gulls and, if we're lucky, Arctic Tern. We'll go rain, shine or snow!

**Saturday**  
**5 June**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**to**  
**12:30 p.m.**

#### **FWG ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE**

**Where:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre, off Prince of Wales Drive, just south of the traffic circle (Map at <http://www.ofnc.ca/fletcher/location.php>).

In the spirit of "thinking globally and acting locally," we can restore some of this destroyed habitat by using native plants to create wildlife-friendly backyards. Native plants provide the food and shelter that our native birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and other insects have adapted to over millions of years and rely on for their survival. Choose from a variety of beautiful flowers and attractive foliage and your garden—and the creatures that use it—will reward you all season.

Sunday  
6 June  
8:30 a.m.

### A STROLL THROUGH MER BLEUE BOG

**Leader:** Connie Clark (613-729-1815)

**Meet:** Carlingwood Shopping Centre, off Carling Avenue, Main Front Door (Entrance 1).

Mer Bleue is a relic of the last Ice Age. The Ottawa River once flowed through Mer Bleue 9,500 years ago. When the river abandoned the south channel, it left behind a shallow lake now known as Mer Bleue. From the boardwalk, you can see vegetation floating in cold acidic oxygenless nutrient-poor water left here around 8,000 years ago. Sphagnum moss survive in these conditions and Pink Lady's Slippers, Bog Laurel, Bog Rosemary, Small and High Bush Cranberry, Leatherleaf, Labrador Tea, and sundews live alongside it. Come and see the hardy plants that have learned to survive under harsh conditions. This trip will be cancelled if it rains on the day of the trip

Tuesday  
8 June  
7:00 p.m.  
Social & Club  
business  
7:30 p.m.

### OFNC MONTHLY MEETING

#### POLAR TREES AND A WALKING SEAL: INVESTIGATING FOSSIL EVIDENCE FROM CANADA'S HIGH ARCTIC

**Speaker:** Dr. Natalia Rybczynski

The fossil record of Canada's High Arctic offers rich evidence for investigating evolution, biogeography, ecology and climate change. Natalia's research program focuses on the Neogene Age (23.0 to 2.6 million years ago), a time when the Arctic was relatively warm and forested. In this talk, she will present the results from her research into the Arctic climate before the Ice Ages, and describe how fossil-based research plays a role in our understanding of current Arctic warming trends. She will also introduce our most recently named Arctic fossil, *Puijila darwini* (2009), and describe how this fossil is being used to investigate the early evolution of pinnipeds (seals, sea lions and walruses), from land to sea.

Sunday  
13 June  
7:15 a.m.  
to  
about  
12 noon

### BIRDING AT JACK PINE TRAIL

**Leaders:** Gillian Mastromatteo (613-599-6115) and Fenja Brodo (613-723-2054)

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot near Pizza Pizza, Richmond Road at Assaly Road (or Jack Pine Trail Parking Lot #9 at about 7:30 a.m.).

The Jack Pine Trail, located in Stony Swamp, is a wonderful trail for finding breeding birds in the territory. Because of its many different habitats, such as marsh, open meadows, and deciduous and coniferous woods, we can expect to find warblers, vireos, herons, flycatchers, rails, and many other species. While this will be primarily a birding trip, we will also watch for other wildlife. Bring binoculars and a morning snack.

**Saturday**  
**19 June**  
**9:00 a.m.**  
**to**  
**about**  
**4:00 p.m.**

#### **FERN TRIP**

**Leaders:** Erica Phillips (613-232-2353) and Fenja Brodo (613-723-2054)

**Meet:** Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot near Pizza Pizza, Richmond Road at Assaly Road (or at Steele & Hammond Rds, off Rte. 148, beyond the Eardley Masham Rd., at 10:30 a.m.).

We are going to a very special spot where the Moonwort Fern (*Botrichium matricariifolium*) grows in company with several other ferns of interest. To find it involves scrambling down and up a deep ditch that cuts across the footpath. We will eat lunch at Fairbairn Bay where some interesting marsh ferns may be found. The biting flies will be out, so come prepared! A hand lens or magnifying glass would be useful as well as fern books, if you have them. Heavy rain will cancel this trip; check with one of the leaders if the weather looks questionable.

**Sunday**  
**27 June**  
**2:00 p.m.**  
**to**  
**about**  
**4:00 p.m.**

#### **FAMILY OUTING TO MER BLEUE**

**Leader:** Fenja Brodo (613-723-2054)

**Meet:** Mer Bleue Parking Lot, at end of Ridge Rd.

Bring your kids (or grandkids), or just yourselves, for an exploration of a unique place which has a bog, marsh, swamp, forest and dry sandy areas all within a short walk. A boardwalk crosses over the wetter parts. We will look for swimming creatures in the water, insects and birds elsewhere, and see how many other animals we can spot. Outhouses and picnic tables are there for our use.

**Saturday**  
**3 July**  
**8:30 a.m.**

#### **FOURTH ANNUAL OTTAWA AREA BUTTERFLY COUNT**

**Leaders:** Jeff Skevington (613-832-1970) and Peter Hall. Call Jeff Skevington between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Friday night if in doubt about the weather.

**Rain date:**  
**Sunday**  
**4 July**

**Meet:** In the parking lot at the intersection of Dwyer Hill Road and March Road (northeast of Almonte). Any specific questions about the trip can be directed to Jeff Skevington. Please register for this event with Jeff by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Although numbers are unlimited, we need to have an idea of the number of participants in order to set up groups and area coverage in advance. By registering, Jeff can also coordinate groups who would prefer to meet in Ottawa and car pool to the site. The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) has coordinated butterfly counts following the same format as Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) for many years. These counts are published as part of an ongoing program of NABA to

census the butterflies of North America (see <http://www.naba.org/counts.html> for more information). Volunteer participants focus on a 24- km diameter circle and conduct a one-day census of all butterflies sighted within that circle. As with CBCs, there is a \$4.00 charge to support the publication of the results (not obligatory, but encouraged; children under 12 are free).

This is the fourth year that OFNC will sponsor a count. The count area will be centred at Manion Corners (southwest of Ottawa). It includes several important butterfly areas such as the Long Swamp and the Burnt Lands alvar. Since this is an all day event, bring your lunch. No experience is necessary! We will put teams together on site and match up people so that everyone has a chance to learn from the experts. If you have binoculars and/or a butterfly net, bring them along. Butterflies may be captured and brought to the count compilation alive for identification and release. We will meet at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden at 5:30 p.m. after the count for a compilation and pot luck dinner. Please bring along some food to share plus your own drinks. We will have a collection of butterflies along to help people figure out what they saw and learn a bit more about these amazing creatures. We hope that everyone can make it to the compilation, as it will be a lot of fun. However, if you cannot make it, we will collect your data from you in the afternoon before you leave.

**Tuesday**  
**6 July**  
**9:30 a.m.**

**BUTTERFLIES OF LAROSE FOREST**  
**Leader:** Peter Hall and Christine Hanrahan  
**Meet:** Fletcher Wildlife Garden.

Larose Forest, 40 minutes east of Ottawa, has a tremendous variety of butterflies. In recent years, Mulberry Wing, Delaware, Dion, and Broad-winged Skippers have been found, as well as many other species. Join Peter Hall, co-author of the *Butterflies of Canada*, for a leisurely stroll along some of the forest trails that have proven especially good for butterflies. Bring insect repellent, lunch, and water. The trip will last approx. 3 hours. The trip is limited to 15 participants. Please register with the club number.

**Rain date:**  
**Thursday**  
**8 July**

*DEADLINE: Material intended for the July - September issue must be in the editor's hands by 1 May, 2010. Mail your manuscripts to:*

**Karen McLachlan Hamilton, 2980 Moodie Drive, Nepean, ON, K2J 4S7**  
**H: (613) 838-4943; email: [hamilton@storm.ca](mailto:hamilton@storm.ca)**

**ANY ARTICLES FOR TRAIL & LANDSCAPE?**

Have you been on an interesting field trip or made some unusual observations?  
Write up your thoughts and send them to Trail & Landscape.

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